

LETTERS FROM AN ABSENTEE.

No. 2.

Steamboats in California.—Discovery of Coal.—Agricultural Resources of the country.—Benecia.—Vallejo.—Peregrine Letters.

Since the date of my last, I have visited Benecia—the city of Benecia—the would be rival of San Francisco, but before sketching my impressions of that locality, I must allude to the present facilities for travel in California. More than forty steamboats of various sizes are now running upon the Bay and its tributaries. I went to Benecia on board the Wilson G. Hunt, a new boat just out from the Atlantic States, and returned on board the New World. Both are beautiful vessels, fitted up with elegance and admirably suited to the trade between San Francisco and Sacramento. These boats, together with the numerous fleet of steam vessels, running upon the rivers, have nearly taken the place of sailing vessels of every description. Scores and hundreds of sailing vessels were two years ago to be seen slowly ploughing their way by the aid of winds and tides, but now scarcely a single sailing craft will be seen after leaving the harbor of San Francisco. It is no uncommon occurrence to behold several boats leaving the wharf at the same instant, while the crowd gathering to witness their departure presents the same appearance as will be seen in those countries which have long been settled. I find it quite impossible to divest myself of the idea, that California is not an old country, and San Francisco a city of half a century's growth.

Not only does steam appear as the agent to facilitate commerce and navigation, but it is now in California applied in various ways to save time and labor. Steam is here applied to the printing press, the pile driving machine, the manufacture of patent medicines, sugar candy, and I know not how many more descriptions of machinery. Coal is remarkably cheap, and the necessary cost attending the use of the steam power is very much diminished from what it was several months ago. Good shops for the manufacture and repair of machinery have been erected. Iron and brass foundries are in full blast! Very soon the country will possess within itself the various agents for self-existence.

It has long been a matter of speculation whether coal would be found in the country, but recently it has been discovered about seven miles from Benecia. I have seen specimens, and learn that judges pronounce it to be of an excellent quality for domestic use, although it may not answer the purpose for generating steam. As yet, however, I suppose no very satisfactory opinion can be formed. Coal and other valuable minerals are unquestionably to be found in the country, which in due time will become articles of consumption and commerce.

The simple truth is, comparatively little is yet known respecting this country. I will illustrate this remark, by reference to its agricultural resources. The impression has gone abroad that it never would become an agricultural country, but must depend upon Oregon, the Sandwich Islands and other lands for its grains and vegetables. This was the impression that I entertained some months since, but I am now most thoroughly convinced that I was in an error. Agriculturists must not come here and expect to find the soil and the climate the same as elsewhere, but let them study the nature of the various soils and the proper mode of agriculture adapted to the country, and I am fully convinced that this country will speedily advance to the first rank for agricultural products. No where have I seen finer specimens of garden products than in the San Francisco and Benecia markets. At present these specimens are few and prices high, but if one man on a small piece of land can raise good potatoes, beets, carrots, turnips, and other kinds of garden vegetables, these may be taken as evidences of what the country is capable of producing when the number of cultivators shall increase. They are now increasing very rapidly, and I have no doubt that in twelve or eighteen months the markets of San Francisco will be abundantly supplied with the very best of vegetables, at moderate prices.

I will now briefly give my impressions respecting Benecia, located upon the north side of the straits of Carquena, and about thirty miles from San Francisco. Great efforts have been made by the proprietors and land holders in Benecia to make it the rival of this city, but these efforts have signally failed, although as a site for a large city, and facilities for shipping, it presents advantages far superior. The surrounding scenery is beautiful, especially at this season of the year, when the valleys, hills and mountains are covered with a carpet of green, curiously wrought with nature's handy work. Flowers of various kinds gladden the eye and perfume the air. During an excursion which we made in the country, our route in one direction lay over a plain three miles in extent, perfectly level and perfectly covered with wild flowers, over which the well-fed herds of General Vallejo roamed at large, while the eye of the spectator as he sweeps the horizon beholds cattle upon a thousand hills.

At present within an area of two miles Benecia contains about two hundred dwellings, and some houses, nearly all of which have been built since my visit to the spot in July 1849. In the centre of this cluster of buildings, rises the spire of the new Presbyterian Church, which has just been dedicated, and on a neighboring eminence the village school house. It is most gratifying to witness those indications of American colonization and civilization. The church and the school house—the gospel minister and the village school master have kept pace with that tide of humanization which for more than two centuries have been rolling over valley and prairie, hill and mountain, of the American continent. In Benecia there is a population of about fifteen hundred, but it is constantly upon the increase. It is, in reality, one of the most desirable locations for a family residence in California.

BRIG ASHORE AT HANAIE, KAUAI.—We hear, verbally, from Kauai, that the brig Chameleon (formerly Copiapo), got upon the rocks at Hanaie, some time last week, carrying away her rudder, and otherwise damaging her to a considerable extent. She was, finally, got off, but looking badly; requiring constant pumping, to keep her afloat.

Sabbath morning, (May 25th), a sermon will be preached in the Bethel in behalf of the Hawaiian Bible Society, and a collection will be taken up.

FOREIGN NEWS.—The steamship New Orleans, Capt Wood, arrived at San Francisco on the 3d inst., by which dates were received from New York to the 28th of March.

Major M. M. Noah, one of the oldest editors in the United States, died on the 22d of March, in New York. J. S. Skinner, editor of "The Plough, the Anvil and the Loom," was killed on the 21st, by falling through a doorway into a cellar at the Post office in Baltimore. Isaac Hill, of New Hampshire, also died on the 23d, in Washington city.

PANAMA.—Gold Robbery.—The gold train of the U. S. mail Steamship Co., was robbed on its transit of several thousand dollars.

NAVAL.—The U. S. S. Savannah, Com. Page, bearing the broad pennant of Com. McCauley, left her anchorage at Tubago, on the 12th April, homeward bound.

The U. S. sloop-of-war Vincennes, Capt. W. L. Hudson, arrived at Panama on the 12th, from Guayaquil and San Francisco.

Yesterday morning, April 14th, H. B. M.'s 84 gun ship Portland, bearing the flag of Rear Admiral Moresby, arrived at Panama from the South. She was followed in, shortly after anchoring, by the steamer Driver.

ENGLAND.—Advices to the 15th March, from Europe, have been received in New York. Lord John Russell, and all the members of his cabinet, still hold their places.

The agitation on the part of the R. Catholics, both of England and Ireland, against the proposed final measures of Lord John Russell, continues unabated.

A large body of Hungarian and Polish refugees from the late struggle in Hungary, had arrived in Liverpool, for America. The English Govt. have, so far, paid or offered £8 to every man who will go to America. A few of the Hungarians accepted the offer, but the Poles have all refused.

Accounts from the Cape of Good Hope represent the British reverses as severe. Three officers and seventy-five men have been killed; three officers and twenty-two men wounded; and seventy inhabitants of the frontier villages destroyed.

The U. S. frigate St. Lawrence, arrived at Southampton, March 13th, with the greater part of the American contributions to the World's Fair. She proceeds to France for the remains of Com. John Paul Jones.

FRANCE.—There is but little news of moment from France, by this arrival.

Gen. Exelman has been raised to the rank of Marshal of France.

The celebration of the Carnival has exercised a depressing influence upon the people of the capital.

All hopes of a fusion between the two branches of the Bourbon family, is at an end. The young Prince, at Claremont, has written, to that effect, to the Orleans Committee, at Paris.

The following vessels were advertised, in San Francisco, for these islands:—

Wm. H. Shailer, to sail May 4, for Lahaina and Honolulu.

Schooner Adventure, to sail May 7th, for Honolulu.

Bark Don Quixote, to sail, on May 8th, for Honolulu.

Bark Orient, for Manila, to touch at Honolulu. Soon.

MEETING OF THE S. I. MISSION.—This body has been in Session, as a Mission, for the transaction of business pertaining to their labors upon the islands, since Wednesday the 14th instant. The male members present number twenty-three, several being absent, and several having received their dismission from the American Board, and being no longer in connection with them, but as corresponding members.

It is, perhaps, known to most of our readers, that the American Board wish to withdraw from the Sandwich Islands, and to have the missionaries become pastors of the native churches, and look to them for support, precisely as ministers are supported upon the voluntary plan, in the United States.

Several of the pastors have already taken their dismission, and no longer draw a support from the Missionary Board in Boston. Others have in contemplation to do so, as soon as possible; and when all shall have done so, there will then be no "Sandwich Island Mission" left; but the individuals now composing it will have become merged in the nation; and the responsibility and privilege of sustaining and perpetuating the institutions of religion and education will devolve upon the nation itself. It is presumed that all who take a dismission from the Board, will become subjects of His Hawaiian Majesty; and that they and their families will, therefore, regard the Islands as their home, and identify themselves with the nation, as component parts thereof.

We hear that the services of the Rev. J. F. Pogue have been engaged, to fill the vacancy in the College at Lahaina.

THE MARCH MAIL.—The New York mail of 12th of March, arrived in San Francisco on the 25th of April, but was not forwarded by the Angelo which sailed after the 1st of May, and arrived here on the 16th.

We will once more inquire if it is not possible to effect an arrangement with the Post Office Department of the United States, by which all mailable matter for the islands can be assorted in New York, and put in a separate bag, not to be opened except upon its arrival here. Could this be done, the delay now experienced in opening and assorting a hundred bags in the San Francisco Post Office, to get together what belongs to the islands, would be obviated. The bag or bags for the islands would be ready to put on board any vessel that might be leaving that port, and thus from three to twelve days might be gained in our receipt of the mail here. This is an advantage worth making an effort to achieve; and the subject is again submitted to those whose duty it is to proceed in it. Let it be tried, and if unsuccessful, we shall know the reason why.

A little diplomatic correspondence between our minister of Foreign Relations and the Commissioner of the United States, will soon set this matter in its proper light, and lead to the adoption of a measure of the greatest importance to the commercial community here.

To make room for California intelligence, we have been obliged to omit much other matter prepared for this paper; among which are one or two communications, which would otherwise have appeared. Correspondents must send us their names, or we must decline the publication of their papers, if of such a nature as to lead to controversy.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.—We have received several communications of late without the name of the writers. As a general rule, we do not publish such, but use our own discretion in relation to them. We would therefore say to our contributors, that it is altogether proper to require the names of writers for our paper, but all such secrets will be safe with us.

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House of Nobles.

The House met in session only three days of the present week, Monday, Tuesday, and Friday, and were occupied on the two bills sent up from the lower house, in regard to the fisheries; the bill regulating public shows, for licensing horses, that on the fourth, that providing for a director of internal improvements, and some matters relating to the internal affairs of the kingdom.

The two bills in relation to the fisheries were discussed at much length, and with much spirit, but without acrimony or any great diversity of sentiment. The leading speakers were Mr. Kekuanoa, J. H. A. Pali, P. Kanoa, Dr. Judd and Mr. Armstrong. It was a subject acknowledged by all to be rather embarrassing, and one on which both chiefs and people feel deeply, Hawaiians being unusually fond of fish. The Nobles were quite unanimous in the opinion that the government fish should be surrendered to the common people, now that the finances of the country do not require the trifling revenue arising from them, and that the konohiki, or landholders should be restricted to the fish allowed them by law. An excellent feeling was exhibited in all the speeches towards the makaianaka, or common people.

The bill sent from the lower house regulating public shows, met with no opposition at all, and passed without discussion. As recently conducted in Honolulu, they were declared by those who did speak, to be a great evil which needed regulation. Some members even advocated their suppression altogether, as now conducted, as they gather up all the money of the natives, encourage night disorders, licentiousness, drunkenness and kindred evils.

The bill requiring a license for letting and jobbing horses in Honolulu, was modified, changing the price of the license from twenty-five cents to five dollars, and returned to the lower house. It was contended that the evil complained of would not be effected in the least by so trifling a sum, and some opposition was also made to the bill on account of the clause forbidding the letting of horses to be used on Sunday, but the majority sustained the clause.

House of Representatives.

May 15.—Several petitions were presented from different parts of the Kingdom, praying, among other things, that the duty on spirits may not be reduced. That from Kohala, presented by Mr. Lec, was signed by 2281 persons.

The different portions of the King's speech were referred to their appropriate committees. The bill to regulate the letting of horses in Honolulu, was passed after discussion and amendment.

The bill to protect the people in certain rights of fishery, was passed.

May 17.—A petition was presented from Wailuku, against selling gaming lands in large quantities to clergymen of any denomination, and praying that the salaries of tax officers and judges may be increased. Referred.

Mr. Richardson presented a petition from Maui, praying that Kalepoulo be made a port of entry. Laid on the table. Several petitions were presented against reducing the duty on spirits.

The seat of the member for Koolapoulo was declared vacant, on the ground that he was not elected by a majority of votes, as set forth in the petition of a large number of the inhabitants of the district. New election ordered.

On motion of Mr. Parsons the bill to provide for the removal of the fort, was laid on the table.

The committee to whom was referred the bill to make Kalepoulo a port of entry, reported against the bill. Report adopted.

May 19.—Mr. Rhodes from the committee on commerce, recommended certain amendments in the postage law, and fixing the postage on foreign letters outward and inward at five cents.

Mr. Robertson presented a resolution in favor of the appointment of Lieut. Governors for the different islands, to assist the Governors in the supervision of the collection of taxes, the administration of justice, internal improvements, &c. The resolution was unanimously adopted, and a select committee appointed to frame a bill.

May 20.—Kahooki presented a petition from Kauai, praying that Kauai may be made a port of entry. Laid on the table.

Mr. Parsons from the committee on finance reported back the auction license law, passed by the King in Council in the month of December 1849. Laid on the table.

Mr. Rhodes, from the committee on conference, reported back the Government Fisheries Bill, ordered to be engrossed as amended, and made the order of the day for Wednesday.

May 21.—Kapele presented a petition from Waimae, Kauai, praying for an alteration in the road and school taxes. Laid on the table. Kauai presented a petition from Wailuku, Maui, against reducing the duty on spirits, and praying that the salaries of tax officers and judges may be increased. Referred. Messrs. Rooke and Gulick were appointed a committee to find a translator for the House.

A message was received from the House of Nobles referring to the Representatives the ordinance relating to port charges, passed by the King in Council, on the 12th of March, and recommending that some of the ports of entry be closed. Referred to the Committee on Commerce.

Dr. Rooke presented a bill to declare the Coral stone on the reefs free to the public, not, however, so as to interfere with the private rights of individuals. Read a first time and made the order of the day for Friday.

Mr. Robertson presented a bill relating to the tonnage dues of Whale ships. Read a first time and made the order of the day for Saturday.

May 22.—Kekaula presented a petition from the Nobles of Koolapoulo, praying that the duty on spirits be increased. Referred.

Mr. Rhodes, from the Committee on Commerce, made a report recommending that the Ports of Kawaihae and Waimea be closed. Laid on the table.

Mr. Rhodes also reported a Bill to regulate the Post Office. Read a first time and recommended.

A resolution was passed requesting the House of Nobles to reconsider the petition of the Legislative Council on June 21st, unless some matter of great importance should prevent it.

Mr. Parsons presented a bill to close the ports of Kealahou and Waimea. Read a first and second time and made the order of the day for Friday, in committee on the bill.

Mr. Robertson presented a bill for the better prevention of smuggling. Read a first and second time, and ordered to be engrossed.

Mr. Parsons moved for a return of all lands appropriated for schools. Ordered.

LOSS OF AM. BRIG FORTUNIO.—Early on Monday morning, the 19th instant, a brig was discovered off Waikiki, hard upon the rocks, and evidently in a perilous situation. She was in the midst of the breakers, and seemed to be thumping heavily, and threatened with a speedy breaking up. It was soon ascertained that it was the brig Fortunio, from Sydney, bound to San Francisco, with passengers and freight. The following are the particulars of her loss, derived from an authentic source:—

At 5 P. M. on the 18th May, made Diamond Head, N. E. 10 miles east, hove too, and lay till 30 A. M., with wind from S. E. E. Braced up the harbor tack, running along the reef for the harbor. Wind inclining to the westward. 3 A. M., sounded 13 fathoms. Soon as the men were at their stations, put the vessel in stays. She was coming round readily as usual, when the wind came out from the S. W. in a severe squall, taking all the sails, and in a minute we were close upon the breakers. The only alternative now was to wear. The helm was immediately put up and not having much headway her bows swung clear of the reef, but her quarter struck heavily. Immediately trimmed all sail nearly to the wind, (it being about S. W. with starboard tack aboard, in hopes she would work off without much damage. But she kept working round to the south until her sails would not stand full. Clewed up every thing, got up the kedge anchor and hauled to try and kedge off, but before the anchor was ready to put into the boat, the vessel had bilged and the water level with the decks. In a few minutes she was down to the bottom, with passengers and freight. The following are the particulars of her loss, derived from an authentic source:—

PASSENGERS.—Mr. Humphreys, wife and daughter, Messrs. Lewis, Sullivan, and Brodick, Miss M. A. Fisher, Mr. Johnson, wife, Mr. Castle, wife and two children, Mr. Kennedy and wife, Mrs. Shyng and child.

The Fortunio was insured in Portland, U. S., and some part of her cargo in Sydney, N. S. W. The vessel will be a total loss, but some part of the cargo may be saved, in a damaged condition.

The mail, from Sydney for San Francisco, was received, in good condition, at the Post Office here, and has been despatched per Loo Choo.

DIED.

In the Hospital at Lahaina, May 15th, John Lewis, from inflammation of the brain. Mr. L. was 34 officer of the ship Otago, and was about 35 years of age.

In the Hospital at Lahaina, May 13th, of consumption, Mr. S. B. Brown, aged about 25. Mr. B. was from Western New York, and had come to Lahaina.

MARINE JOURNAL.
PORT OF HONOLULU.

Arrived.

May 18.—Br brig Waclock, Luen, 20 ds fm Christmas Is. 20—An brig Fortunate, Hasty, 56 ds fm Sydney, wrecked at Waikiki, Oahu.

May 17.—Br brig Pacific, Casanova, Batavia, E. I. Hanc schr Gessie, Hancsh, Valparaiso. Hanc brig Lagoon, Hancsh, Sydney. Hanc brig Lagoon, Hancsh, Sydney.

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CO-PARTNERSHIP NOTICE.—The undersigned

have this day entered into a co-partnership under the firm of C. F. Hussey & Co., for the sale of merchandise generally, and farming cargoes of potatoes and other island produce, at Kahului, Maui.

C. F. HUSSEY.
J. S. VANINGEN.
April 1, 1851. 3m-47 E. S. RUGGLES.

TO THE LADIES, GENTLEMEN, and Hotel Keepers of Honolulu.—The undersigned being a professed cook, respectfully solicits the patronage of persons giving dinner or supper parties. Cold collations served up with taste and economy. Address to J. Robins, bakers, King, at 3m-47 W. O. WEBB.